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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR CALLS ON AL-HAKIM ON HIS RETURN FROM TEHRAN

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Tawafuq's Potential Withdrawal

¶1. (C) ISCI chairman Abdulaziz al-Hakim, who returned on July 24 from chemotherapy treatment in Tehran, told the Ambassador on July 26 that he had urged Vice President Tarik al-Hashemi to work with Tawafuq and members of the UIC to find a solution to Tawafuq's potential withdrawal from the government. Al-Hakim said that al-Hashemi had told him that he (al-Hashemi) understood that "we have to live together." Noting the sensitivities between al-Hashemi and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, al-Hakim said that UIC leaders such as Vice President Adel Abdul Mehdi and leading ISCI member Humam Hamoudi should discuss Tawafuq's concerns with its leaders. Then the UIC leaders could talk with Maliki. According to al-Hakim, who had seen al-Hashemi earlier in the day and talked with Maliki, Maliki was "ready" to consider Tawafuq's concerns and sought "practical ways of moving forward."

¶2. (C) Hamoudi, also present, offered his analysis of Tawafuq's move, noting that it fit the Sunni leaders' pattern of causing a new crisis after the latest one was solved. He questioned whether Sunni leaders wanted the new Iraq to succeed. While acknowledging that he had doubts about the commitment of certain Sunni leaders such as Khalaf al-Ollayan to the new Iraq, the Ambassador shared his belief that al-Hashemi was a serious leader whose concerns merited serious consideration. Noting that human rights was one of al-Hashemi's concerns, Al-Hakim agreed that "we all want to respect human rights" but argued that, in the midst of Iraq's war against terrorism, "it is hard to have appropriate prisons for all detainees. But we need to find a way to give them (Tawafuq) something they are looking for."

"Sherpas" Meetings

¶3. (C) Hamoudi said that the "sherpas" meetings (meetings of key advisors before a potential leadership summit meeting) were proceeding well, with the group meeting daily and working to define differences between the various blocs on key issues. The only Kurdish Alliance and Tawafuq participants were (respectively) Barham Salih and Ayad al-Samarai'e, he said. Asked about CoR Speaker Mahmoud Mashhadani, Hamoudi said that the UIC had agreed not to press the issue during the current CoR term (which ends July 31). "We don't need another crisis now," he observed. The Ambassador agreed, but also offered his opinion that the only true solution to Mashhadani would be to have him replaced.

Al-Hakim's Health and Travel Plans

¶4. (C) Al-Hakim did not shake hands but showed normal energy and engagement during the meeting. His face was jaundiced and he had lost his beard and moustache. He said his treatment was going well and that he planned to return to Tehran "in a week to ten days" for the next round of chemotherapy.

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